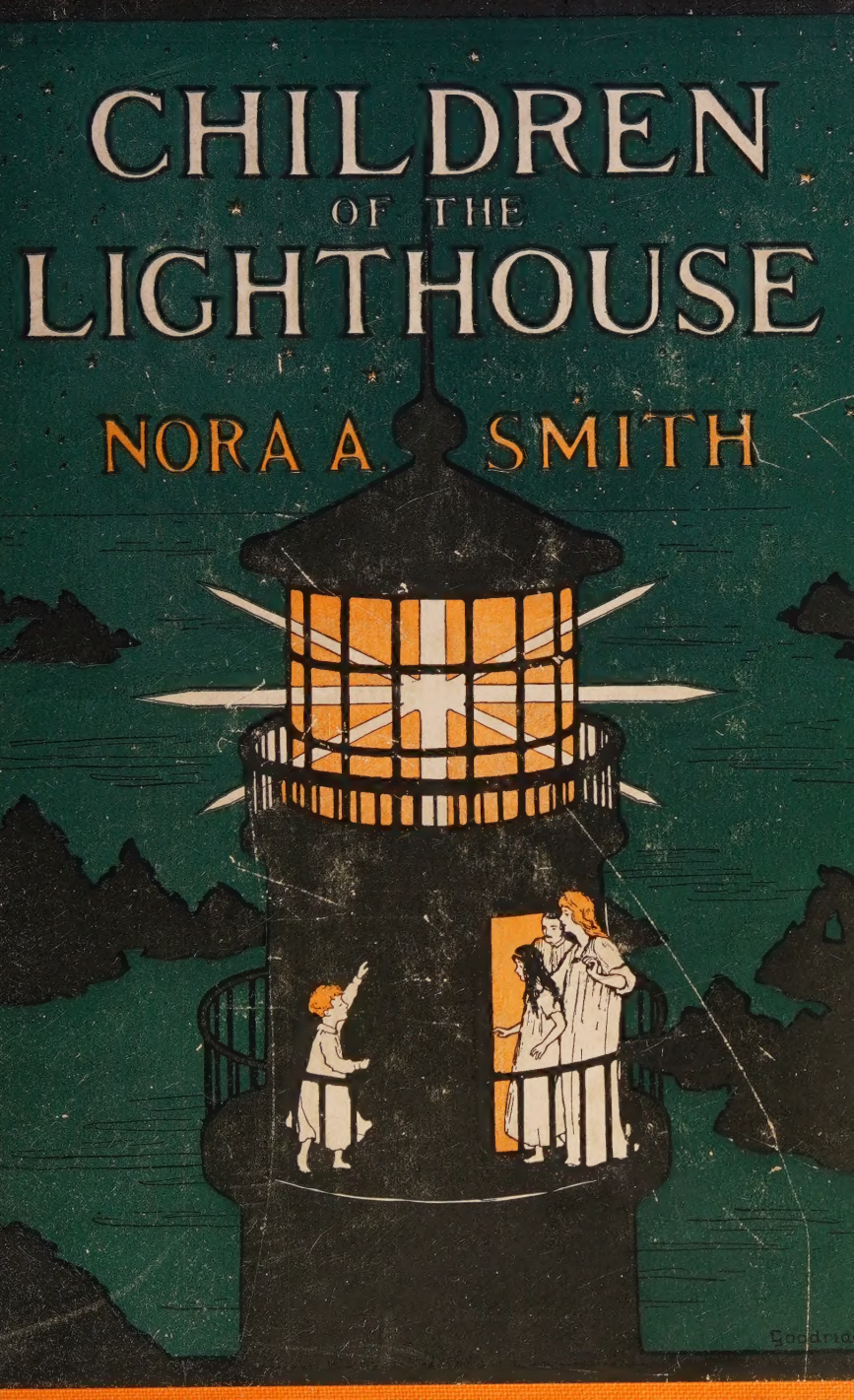
CHILDREN OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

NORA A. SMITH



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By Miss Nora A. Smith

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

CHILDREN OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

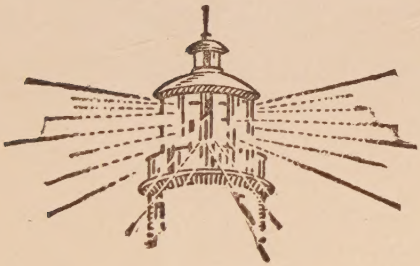
THE CHILDREN, JENNY LIND, AND JIM CROW

CHILDREN OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

BY

NORA ARCHIBALD SMITH

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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Drawn by Elinor M. Goodridge

CHILDREN OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

CHAPTER I

THE ISLAND

"WILL-ERY you-ery come-ery with-ery me-ery and-ery play-ery?" shouted Ronald from the little patch of green in front of the Lighthouse.

"Yes-ery, I-ery will-ery!" answered Lesley, jumping up from the sand and tucking her book in a cleft of the rocks. Scrambling up the cliff like a sturdy little mountain goat, she reached Ronald laughing and rosy and panting out breathlessly, "What-ery shall-ery we-ery play-ery?"

"I hadn't thought," said Ronald, descending from their "secret language" to plain English. "Maybe we'll get Jenny Lind and bring up some kelp to put on our gardens."

"I don't call that play," objected Lesley; "that's good hard work!"

"Oh, nothing isn't work," said Ronald, sensibly, if ungrammatically, "if you do it for play."

"You are the funniest boy, Ronnie, I ever knew in all my life!" exclaimed Lesley.

"Sure I am!" laughed Ronald. "I must be, for I'm the only boy you ever did know!" — and here they both broke into a hearty peal of merriment that brought their mother, smiling, to the window.

It was true enough. Lesley and Ronald, eleven and eight years old, were the only children on the island and the only ones who had ever been there, but they were not by any means the only young things. There was a score of light-footed, dancing kids, there was a comfortable number of chickens, a rushing, scampering horde of rabbits, "Jim," the pet crow, and uncounted half-grown sea-birds in the shelters of the cliffs.

As for grown-ups, there were the children's father and mother, Malcolm and Margaret McLean, and the old Mexican sailor, Pancho Lopez, commonly known as "Stumpy." Then there was the donkey, Jenny Lind, so called for the power and melody of her voice, and of course the parents of all the kids, chickens, rabbits, and sea-birds. In the pools of the rocks and

on the beach there were jellyfish, great and small, starfish, crabs and sea-anemones, but these, although they added to the population of the island, could not be said to increase its gayety.

Gayety, though, as everybody knows, never comes from outside; it is just something that bubbles up from within, and Lesley and Ronald McLean each had a boiling spring of it in their own hearts.

The springs had not ceased to bubble after what the children considered Ronald's first-class joke, when the sound of clattering hoofs and the roll of wheels announced the approach of that Jenny Lind whom they had intended to use as a playmate.

"Run, Ronnie, quick!" cried Lesley, "and see if father's going down to the beach. Maybe we can go with him."

"Hi! Father! Father!" called Ronald. "Wait for us!" running at top speed toward the cliff.

The donkey was pulled in at once, turning her head toward the children intelligently as they scrambled down the rocks to the car and starting on her way the moment she felt their weight and knew they were on board.

The children's island, one of those in San Francisco

Bay, is not a large one — perhaps three miles around — but it looks as if it were three times three miles deep in rocks. There are tall gray peaks shining like spear-heads above the water — peaks where the sea-birds build; great stretches of gray stone like castle walls, with towers and battlements; scattered fragments of granite heaped up like crumbs from a giants' banquet, and ten trillion, two hundred and forty-one billion, five hundred and ninety-seven million, six hundred and nineteen thousand, four hundred and three stones and pebbles of various sizes along the shore.

Oh, no, there is no beach; just a rocky island with rocky edges and old Ocean singing and sighing and laughing and crying all around and about. No two-legged, or four-legged, or ever-so-many-legged creature could draw loads from the shore to the Lighthouse over such a roadway, even if it had been on level ground, and so Malcolm McLean, with the help of old "Stumpy" and a man brought from the mainland for a week, had laid down rails the entire distance and prevailed upon the Government to send him a little car which Jenny Lind pulled with ease over her private track.

"Going down to the storehouse for oil," called Father, looking around at the youngsters from his perch in front. "You can stay down there with Stumpy for a while, if you like, or go back with me."

"Oh, Stumpy, Stumpy!" cried Ronnie. "Maybe he'll tell us a story."

"Maybe he will," said Father, dryly, nodding his head; "he'd rather tell stories than work any day."

"Perhaps," said Ronald, thoughtfully, "it might be just the same as work if you had to make up the stories."

"But he *doesn't* have to," came quickly from Lesley; "they all happened to him."

"No, not all," eagerly, from Ronald; "not 'The White Slipper' — I'm going to ask him for that to-day."

"No, not 'The White Slipper,'" agreed Lesley. "But I wish he'd tell us po'try, like what mother reads sometimes. I made up some myself last night about Jenny Lind."

"About Jenny Lind? You couldn't make po'try about a donkey!"

"You just listen now and see if I couldn't," cried Lesley.

"To shaggy Jenny Lind
There came an awful wind
And blew her over the cliff —

Over the cliff . . . over the cliff —" slowly — "What *was* the last line?"

"Which made her puff and piff," laughed Ronald.

"No such word as 'piff,'" objected Lesley.

"It's just as good as 'puff,'" answered the youthful rhymester. "Isn't it, Father?"

Father merely gave an absent-minded murmur, which might have meant either that it was, or that it wasn't, and touched Jenny Lind lightly with the loop of the reins.

Up flew Jenny's hind legs, bounce went the children, flat on the floor of the car, and all question of po'try was dropped as they drew up to the storehouse.

CHAPTER II

STUMPY AND THE STOREHOUSE

STUMPY stood in the doorway, waving a greeting to the children, his wooden leg, topped by a crutch-handle, strapped to his side and his black eyes glowing with pleasure.

He limped down the steps to hitch the donkey for the Lightkeeper, patting the children's heads meantime, as they tumbled about him like frolicsome puppies.

"We've-ery come-ery to-ery see-ery you-ery!" cried Lesley, who was accustomed to use the "secret language" with Stumpy.

"Yes, I see you come all right," smiled Stumpy, "but I no speak your tongue. You go in my house; I be there pretty soon. . . . Aye, aye, sir, coming!" — this to McLean, who waited for him by the barrels of oil.

The children needed no further invitation to Stumpy's dwelling, for it was a museum of curiosities in their eyes, and Ronald gravely wondered how it could be safe to leave such priceless things within

reach of the passers-by. True, there were no passers-by, except those with wings or fins, or traveling on four feet, but at any moment — why not? — a boat might draw up on the strand and a pirate, with a red sash and a knife in his teeth, leap to land and snatch the treasures.

"Stump-ery true,
I love you!"

crooned Lesley, as she sat down by a little table in the corner.

"Stump-ery's a sailor,
Sure as I'm a tailor!"

sang Ronnie, climbing on a chair from which height he could see more easily the wonderful little ship on the mantelpiece.

"But you're *not* a tailor, and you do make silly po'try!"

"Neither isn't Stumpy a sailor, *now*, and maybe I'll be a tailor, some time. . . . Oh, Lesley, isn't this ship the most be-you-tiful thing you've ever seen since you lived in this country?"

Indeed it was a beautiful thing, the pride of Stumpy's heart and the light of his eyes. He had bought it long ago in Mexico from the furnishings of a

Spanish ship wrecked at sea and hauled into port by a passing barque. Whoever originally owned it had prized it dearly, for it stood under a glass case that rested on an ebony stand bordered with scarlet velvet. It was carved from creamy ivory — every mast, every spar, every sail in place, a miniature steersman at the helm and the Spanish ensign bravely floating at the peak. It sailed upon a painted sea sprinkled with tiny crystals of sand that sparkled like the blue waters around the island, and it was undoubtedly one of the most beautiful things that anybody had ever seen, no matter in what country he or she had lived.

Ronald, though a daring and adventurous child, continually watched by sister, mother, or father lest he rush into danger, was yet careful in his own way, and Stumpy knew that he might trust him with his treasures and that the boy would admire "La Golondrina" (The Swallow) without ever thinking of lifting the glass cover that enshrined the tiny treasure.

While his silent worship was going on, Lesley was lifting with careful fingers the feather pictures on the table and admiring the birds, the flowers, the trees, the little landscapes, all made of tiny feathers beautifully colored and pasted into place. These were done

by Indians, Stumpy had told her, and the black-eyed squaws with their shawl-wrapped heads sold them on market-days in the streets of the City of Mexico.

There were Indian water-jars in the room, too, gayly decorated in colors, an Indian bow with its arrows, gourds made into dippers and painted in scarlet and black, and on the wall a tattered Mexican flag with its warlike eagle grasping a rattlesnake and standing on a cactus plant. "*Viva México!*" (Hurrah for Mexico!) Stumpy used to cry as he saluted it in the morning, and the children had learned to salute it, too, the moment they crossed the threshold.

The room had been partitioned off from the storehouse where the oil for the Light was kept and had only a rough floor and whitewashed walls, but Stumpy kept it beautifully clean, and on his small stove he cooked wonderful red beans in Mexican style and made chocolate for the children with foam on the cups an inch high.

His was a lonely life on the edge of the restless ocean, guarding the stores for the Lighthouse, and he was as glad to have a visit from Ronald and Lesley as they were glad to come. They were still admiring his treasures when clatter, clatter, went Jenny Lind's

hoofs again, and away rolled the car with its barrels of oil for the Light.

Another moment, and "*Viva México!*" sounded in the doorway and Stumpy appeared with an armful of driftwood for the evening fire.

'Stump-ery, bump-ery,
Give him a thump-ery!"

shouted Ronald, running to meet him.

"I'm not going to thump him, I'm going to hug him," cried Lesley and she did it, to the old sailor's great delight.

"Now a story, Stumpy, a story!" cried both children, together, and Ronald added quickly, "The White Slipper.'"

"'White Slipper'? No, that too long. Your father say come home one hour. Mother have dinner ready."

"Oh! oh!" with dismal groans. "We thought *you'd* ask us to dinner."

"I would ask, sure I would, but your father boss, you know. He my boss, your boss — Good sailor mind his boss, you bet."

"Well, then, what *will* you tell us?" asked Ronald,

climbing on his knee. "I haven't hardly heard a story since I lived in this country."

Stumpy looked at him with a twinkle in his eye. "Since you lived in this country, hey? But that not very long, you know. Well, I tell you a sea-story, one I know, me, one I see myself — one about a cat."

"A cat!" exclaimed Lesley. "I thought they didn't like water!"

"It is true," said Stumpy; "if they did, there would be no story."

"Tell-ery, tell-ery,
Stump-ery, tell-ery!"

cried Ronald, impatiently.

"Well, it must be twenty year ago," said Stumpy, reflectively, "I ship on cargo steamer to Scotland, your father's and mother's country, you hear them tell."

"'Bonnie Scotland!' we know," said Lesley, drawing nearer.

"We have good voyage Scotland, nothing much happen, all same every day. We land cargo place called Newhaven, all right, get new cargo take back — you not care about that — and when everything ready for leave, Captain say we go ashore, have good

time. Some men they stay on board keep watch, but ten go ashore, and messroom boy — he funny fellow, I think he not right in head" (tapping his forehead) — "he say he take ship's cat, give her good time, too; maybe catch Scotch mouse.

"We all laugh at him. I tell you he funny fellow, and we go uptown and leave him on beach with cat. Some men go get good dinner; some men get drunk, like always; I find other sailor like me, been all over world and we 'swap yarn,' you know."

"We know," nodding heads wisely, for old sailors often came to the island.

"We have orders get back twelve o'clock night," continued Stumpy; "we know, anyway, got do that, and we all start along 'bout eleven, pretty dark, big wind, storm coming all right.

"We get to beach — some, they smoke, some whistle, some walk pretty crooked, and Johnny, that's what mess-boy call himself, sing out to us, 'Come on, boys, big storm ahead, cat get wet.'

"We all laugh some more and make fun, but we don't see anything till we get to boat and there be Johnny with the cat — she was white one, thanks to God!"

"Why do you thank God because she was white?" asked Ronnie, curiously.

"Wait a moment, little son, and you will know," answered Stumpy gravely. "We all get in boat, push off, and begin to row hard as we can, but the farther we get from land the blacker get the dark and the big wave come splash, crash, lift us 'way up, sink us 'way down, keep us tossing like ball in air. Every man do his best; I pray to saints, but no can see ship's lights, no can see other men's face, not know where we go. Of a sudden, maybe pretty near ship — we can't tell — come wave like big mountain, knock every man flat, turn boat over, upside down, no light, no help anywhere."

"Oh, poor Stumpy," sighed Lesley, patting his sleeve, "how dreadful!"

"Every man start to swim best he know how, but where he swim when he see nothing? We half-dead already when we hear that Johnny sing out, 'Look at cat! Look at cat! See where she go!' Thanks to blessed saints, who let a little light down 'bout then, we could just see white spot on top of wave and follow it. Cat see in dark, you know, children, and she not like water, want to get out soon as she can.

"In one moment, we see lights, we see ship, we shout and shout, and men come help us aboard, wet like sponge, cold as ice, and frightened 'way to inside of bones."

"Were all the men saved?" quavered Lesley, round-eyed with excitement.

"Alas, no! little daughter; two of them never seen again!"

A sigh and a little silence followed, and then Lesley's voice was heard again, "And the cat?"

"Ah, the cat, thanks to God, that Johnny grab her just as he get to ship's side and carry her up ladder. She 'most as good as Captain all way back to California, best food, warmest place sleep, every man take off cap to her when he meet, say, 'Good-day to you, Lady Cat!'"

"Good-day, Lady Cat!" mimicked Lesley, laughingly, bowing to an imaginary pussy on the rug. "I wish you a pleasant morning and a fat rat for your dinner!"

"Dinner! Dinner!" cried Stumpy, jumping up from his comfortable chair.

"What your father say, children? Run quick, like rabbits! Go short way up steps! Run quick!"

CHAPTER III

THE LIGHT AND THE LIGHTHOUSE

To reach the Lighthouse from Stumpy's dwelling, you might either follow Jenny Lind's car-track a long way around, or scramble up a rocky path, broken here and there by a flight of whitewashed steps, till you arrived at the top of the mighty heap of rocks that formed the island. Should a high wind be blowing, you crushed your hat far down on your head, gripped the handrail hard when you reached the steps, and often sat down flat until some sudden gust had passed by. As this was Margaret McLean's only fashionable promenade, you can imagine that she seldom ventured on it, preferring to stroll about the patch of green in front of the Lighthouse, or to walk up and down between the scanty rows of vegetables behind. She and her husband, however, were well accustomed to seeing the children scramble over the rocks like their own goats and were never anxious about Ronald, if Lesley were with him, for alone he was apt to venture too far and attempt heights which he might reach, but never be able to descend.

He had been only a tiny tot of two or three years, running about the kitchen, when, sitting on the floor in front of the sink one day, he had amused himself by slipping the various cooking-pots over his head and laughing out at Lesley with a "Peep bo!" from beneath them. His mother, hearing the clatter, was hurrying from another room to inquire into its cause when a series of loud cries and calls for help were heard. She found the baby completely extinguished by a large kettle which Lesley was trying to pull off his head, while the more he struggled and screamed, the tighter grew the kettle.

Mrs. McLean pulled, Lesley pulled, Ronnie beat his hands and kicked and roared until the mother was thoroughly frightened. "Get your father, quick!" she cried to Lesley, and the child climbed, panting, to the tower where Malcolm was trimming the Light. She was too breathless to speak when she reached him, but he saw that something was wrong below and half-leaped, half-tumbled down the stairs to the kitchen. He took the baby in his arms and succeeded with his big sailor voice in reaching the ears under the kettle.

"Be quiet, Ronnie!" he ordered. "Stop crying at once! Father's here. Father'll help you."

The screams stopped, the beating hands grew quiet, and the Lightkeeper walked to and fro patting the small shoulders till they grew still enough to allow him to lay the child in his mother's arms. Then, while Lesley watched him with astonished eyes he seized a lump of lard from the shelf, greased the inside of the kettle and Ronnie's head as far as his hand could reach, saying all the time, "Quiet, sonny, quiet, sonny; Father's here!" This done, with one swift jerk the kettle came off and the small boy was restored to the world.

Oh, what a wonderful father, Lesley thought; there was nothing that he couldn't do and nothing that he didn't know, and I believe that everybody on the island, including Jenny Lind, the rabbits, and the sea-birds, thought much the same thing.

The wonderful father was waiting in the doorway to-day as the children's feet were heard on the rocky pathway, and after a little washing of grimy paws and smoothing of rough locks they all sat down at table. Six times a year the Lighthouse tender called at the island with stores for its inhabitants, so tea and sugar and coffee, flour and meal, spices and cereals were always on hand, but for the rest they depended on

goats' milk, fresh fish, eggs, chickens, rabbits, and such vegetables as they could raise on their wind-swept height, three hundred feet above the sea.

Margaret McLean boasted, when she could find any one to hear her boast, that she could prepare rabbit in fifteen different ways, but which one of the fifteen she followed that day will probably never be known. At all events, it seemed to please the children who jumped down from the table when grace had been said, quite refreshed and ready to dry the dishes and help to set the room in order.

The apartment in question — a large one, fortunately — might have been called one of general utility, for it was kitchen, dining-room, sitting-room, and study, according to the time of day. There was a grand parlor on the other side of the passage, into which the Lighthouse Inspector was ushered when he made his semi-annual calls, but the children never entered it except on cleaning-days when they were allowed to dust the haircloth sofa, the straight-backed chairs, and the round center-table with its big Bible and tall lamp, hung with tinkling glass prisms.

The bedrooms and the playroom were on the next story, and above that ran the flight of narrow steps

that led to the tower, and then above them again the corkscrew stairs that wound about and about till they reached the Light.

In solitary splendor, like the Prince of Coolavin, lived the Light, and Father waited upon it like a slave, filling it with oil, trimming its wicks and polishing and re-polishing and re-re-polishing the speckless glass that sheltered it and through which its beams streamed far, far across the waters.

Every night, as they sang the "Mariner's Hymn" together in the whitewashed sitting-room, with the ceaseless roar and dash of the breakers as their accompaniment, the children thought of the friendly Light in the tower and the gladness of the sailors when they saw it shine.

"Eternal Father! strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave;
Who bidst the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep:
O hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea!"

So ran the words of the "Mariner's Hymn," and Ronald, who always wanted to know the reason of things, said thoughtfully one night when they had

finished singing: "Why do we cry to God to help those in peril on the sea, Daddy? It's the Light that helps them, isn't it?"

"Hush! Ronnie, you're not thinking," cried his mother. "Who made the sea and the sailors? Who gave his brains to the man who thought of the Light and set it here? The Light is but a senseless thing and needs some one to tend it, as well you know your father does both night and day."

"Oh—h!" murmured Ronald, "I see!"

"You're a funny boy!" commented Lesley, as usual.

"Sleep-ery, head-ery,
Better go to bed-ery!"

"Oh-ery, no-ery,
Don't want to go-ery,"

cried Ronald, at which his father lifted his head from the "Lighthouse Journal," saying, "'Gude bairnies cuddle doon at nicht' — you know the poetry your mother tells you."

The children were often allowed to climb the corkscrew stairs with their parents to see the Light and even to open the little door in the masonry and go out

on the iron-railed gallery that ran around the tower, holding tight to Father's or Mother's hand while they gazed at the blue waters of the Pacific and counted the white sails on the horizon.

The Light was not of the first order, although it seemed so wonderful to the children and required more attention than the newer and more expensive ones. It was lighted at dusk, filled again at midnight, and put out at dawn, Margaret McLean always taking the last duty and then hurrying down to kindle the kitchen fire, set the porridge on to heat, and milk the goats.

She was a busy wife and mother; so busy that she had the less time to be lonely, for not only did she wash and iron, sew and knit, scrub and cook, milk the goats, feed the hens, and weed the garden, but she gave the children their daily lessons, making these so pleasant that both could already read with ease and had some knowledge of figures, while Lesley could write a very respectable letter to Grandmother in "Bonnie Scotland."

Mr. and Mrs. McLean knew very well that the children would never be likely to have any playmates, save each other, while they were growing up, for the

work on the island was not more than enough for one man, with Stumpy's assistance, and so there could be no other families in residence. They had done everything they could, therefore, to provide amusement and occupation for them, indoors as well as out. Outdoors was very simple, with Jenny Lind, "Jim Crow," and a host of young animals as playmates, the beloved Stumpy as story-teller-in-chief and fishing, hunting sea-birds' eggs, playing on the shore and gathering seaweed and shells as their games of never-ending delight.

Indoors a playroom had been fitted up the previous year, which was a continual source of pleasure and a blessing, too, to Mrs. McLean, who could always feel that her bairns were safe and happy when they were in "Humpty Dumpty Land," as Lesley had christened it.

It was nothing more or less than the large attic which ran the whole length of the Lighthouse. It was not finished off, but the slanting sides and floor had been stained a pretty green, and numerous shelves had been fitted between the uprights for all the many collections — birds' eggs, seashells, sea-moss, shining pebbles, bright beads, buttons, and those other treas-

"JIM CROW," A PRIVILEGED VISITOR, ADDING AN OCCASIONAL LOW CROAK TO THE CONVERSATION

ures dear to children, which would have been greatly in the way downstairs.

In one corner was a sand-bin, with little tins and patty-pans for making cakes, and a dolls' house occupied another corner where Lesley passed many hours. A rocking-horse, a stable, and a carpenters' bench were Ronald's possessions, and several small chairs and tables were among the other furnishings.

Tacked to the ceiling were a few gay Japanese parasols and lanterns, while straw mats, a contribution from Stumpy's Indian collection, were scattered about the floor. Turkey-red curtains were at the windows, and altogether a more cheerful place could hardly be imagined, especially when both children were talking at once and "Jim Crow," a privileged visitor, adding an occasional low croak to the conversation.

CHAPTER IV

HONEST JIM CROW

JIM CROW, the black, the glossy, the dapper, the wise, the solemn, was not a native of the Lighthouse island, which indeed was too barren a spot for birds fond of good things to eat. He was not a native, but an immigrant, for the Lighthouse Inspector had brought him to Lesley on one of his visits, saying that he had been found in the woods on the mainland — just a little bunch of fuzz with short dark feathers sticking out here and there — and that it was supposed that he had fallen out of the nest and been deserted by his parents.

The Inspector had cared for him until he was now a fine fellow with the glossiest of black feathers, and as he appeared to be of a good disposition and of winning ways there was no reason why he should not make an admirable pet. The children thought so, of course, and were never tired of watching his quaint actions and laughing at his solemn manner.

As soon as Jim Crow grew wonted to his new home, he began to choose his friends and seemed to love

Lesley most of all. Next to her he appeared to fancy a large white hen, with a brood of nine little chicks, in a coop under the shade of a rock. Jim used to visit her many times a day, standing near the bars of her prison and talking with her in a low, croaking tone. Sometimes, between his stories, he would help himself to the food left by Mother Hen and her family; then begin croaking to her again, and Biddy would answer with an occasional cluck as if she understood all that he was telling her.

The old hen, while always watchful over her little ones, never seemed to fear that Jim would hurt any of them, and when the chicks became so large that they were let out of the coop and the family roamed about seeking for worms and insects, Jim still continued his association with them, following them about for hours each day. At nightfall, however, he always came back to his box, while Biddy and her family joined the other fowls in the hen-house.

Another of Jim's chums was the tuneful Jenny Lind. For some portion of each day he used to follow her about, always keeping a few feet from her nose, as she grazed.

When he grew tired of walking, he would hop to her

back, and, squatting upon her hips, where he could not be reached by the switching tail, he would keep up a constant croaking and chattering. This chattering was always in a low tone, but it went up and down just like the voice of a person who is telling some great secret, something not to be repeated to any one else, on any account.

Jim had his dislikes as well as his likes, and he evidently held but a poor opinion of Margaret McLean. She had often caught him snatching a morsel from the kitchen table or shelves and had on each occasion hastily swept him out with the broom. Nowadays he entered the kitchen with a wary eye fixed upon her, and if he did not go upstairs at once to Humpty Dumpty Land, would perch in some high place and scold and grumble to himself. You could always tell from the tone of his voice whether he was scolding or chattering, and Mrs. McLean said she really felt uncomfortable sometimes, when that low croaking voice went on and on behind her back, apparently saying, "Meanie! Meanie! Mean old thing! Drove me out! Drove me out! Wouldn't give me any dinner! Meanie! Meanie!"

Jim's chief interest in Humpty Dumpty Land lay

in the children's collections and particularly in their beads and buttons. Whenever he made a call upstairs, after flying to Lesley's shoulder and caressing her with his beak, he betook himself to the green shelves and turned over the beads, the buttons, and the pebbles one by one, saying to himself, meanwhile: "Oh! pretty, pretty! Pretty, shiny things! Jim Crow like shiny things! Poor Jim Crow! Only have black feathers! *Poor* Jim Crow!"

If these were not his exact words, though Lesley contended that they were, they evidently embodied his meaning and the gleam of envy and desire of possession were so marked in his cunning black eye that on the day of the children's visit to Stumpy, Ronald said as they played in Humpty Dumpty Land, "I wonder if Jim Crow knows anything about your necklace, Lesley!"

This precious treasure, a chain of tiny gold beads sent from Grandmother in Scotland as a New Year's present, had totally disappeared a few weeks after the holiday and not so much as a glint of it had ever since been seen. Lesley had wept bitter tears over the loss and had received many a scolding for her carelessness with the pretty gift, but indeed, indeed, she told her

mother, she had never worn it out of the house and had always kept it at night in a box in her bedroom.

At Ronald's query, Lesley gave a long look at her pet, who was doing hard labor trying to break a button in two, at the same time crooning to himself in a low tone, "Crows have no pretty buttons! Crows *ought* to have pretty buttons! *Poor* Jim Crow!"

"Oh, no, Ronnie," cried Lesley; "Jim would never steal anything of mine; he loves me too well. Don't you, Jimmy?"

"Croak!" answered Master Crow, but he evidently felt that the conversation was becoming too personal, for he left the room at once in his most dignified manner. He did not mention that he held a small red button in his beak, but, as he said afterwards, "What's a button between friends?"

"I'm going right down to Father and see what he thinks," cried Ronnie, running after Jim Crow.

"No, no, Ronnie! Don't tell Father! I'm sure Jim never took my necklace!" called Lesley, in distress.

Ronald was already halfway down stairs and heard not a word his sister said in his haste to find Father, who was discovered at length in the doorway of Jenny Lind's stable smoking his afternoon pipe.

"What's the trouble, sonny?" he asked. "Haste makes waste, you know."

"Oh, Father, I've just thought. Do you believe Jim might have taken Lesley's necklace?"

"Jim?" questioned his father in a puzzled way. "Oh, you mean Jim Crow? Why, I don't know. What makes you think so?"

"It's too bad!" cried Lesley, appearing at this moment; "Ronnie hasn't a bit of reason to say Jim took it."

"Well," said the boy, a little daunted by his sister's indignation, "I only thought . . . You know yourself how much he likes shiny things, and Mother *has* caught him stealing in the kitchen."

A burst of tears was Lesley's answer and her father shook his head at Ronald, saying in a kind voice: "Don't cry about it, daughter. I mind now that there was an old raven in Scotland stole my grandfather's spectacles once, but maybe he wasn't well brought up. . . . I tell you what, children," bringing his hand down with a thump on his knee, "Jim Crow *has* got a 'hidy-hole' up there on the cornice of the house. I've often watched him go there. I'll get the long ladder and see what he keeps in it."

"Oh, let me, Daddy," cried Ronald. "I'll climb up the water-pipe."

"You will not, then," said his father, decidedly; "it's bad for the pipe and bad for your clothes, and you're too heedless and reckless altogether with your climbing."

By this time Mrs. McLean had joined the group and heard the tale, and she now laid a restraining hand on the boy's shoulder, while Lesley's tears were dried in the excitement of the moment.

The long ladder was brought, laid against the house, Father climbed slowly up, reached the spot in the cornice where he had so often seen Jim Crow, and crying out, "Well, if this doesn't beat the Dutch!" burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

"Oh, what, Father? Oh, what?" cried the children, dancing with impatience.

"Let them come up the ladder, Mother," called Malcolm. "I'll hold them and they can see for themselves."

The children were up before you could say Jack Robinson, and, looking into a sheltered place on the cornice, just behind the water-pipe, beheld Jim Crow's hidy-hole with an astonishment not to be described.

It was a veritable robbers' cave, for it held a number of bright feathers, some tinfoil, a variety of beads and buttons, one of mother's thimbles, several pieces of colored glass and china, and, and — yes, it really *did* hold Lesley's necklace.

"Oh, Father! Oh, Father!" cried Lesley, half-laughing and half-crying. "Don't take everything away from poor Jim; do leave him something!"

"Nonsense, you silly child!" called her mother from the foot of the ladder; but her father said, dryly, "I suppose you don't think it necessary to leave him the thimble and the necklace, do you?"

"No, oh, no," whimpered Lesley. "I know that would be silly, but he *will* be disappointed to find them gone when he comes to look at his collection."

"I'm 'fraid he will, poor old Jim," sighed Ronnie, shaking his head.

"Oh, come down the ladder!" called Mother, impatiently. "I'm tired of holding it. If you don't want to hurt Jim Crow's feelings, make him another chain, but bring down my thimble, anyway."

Mother's suggestion was received with enthusiasm. The party descended to earth, but the ladder was left in place while stout thread and large needles were

demanded. Lesley and Ronald sought their stores in Humpty Dumpty Land, and in the course of an hour put together a necklace which would have shamed all the jewels of the Princess Badroulboudour in the "Arabian Nights."

Malcolm McLean, laughing at the pranks of his astonishing children, climbed the ladder and placed the ornament in Jim Crow's hidy-hole and when next that honest bird went to examine his treasures, he is reported to have exclaimed, "My stars and garters! What do you think of that? Now that's what I call a necklace!"

CHAPTER V

A PICNIC WITH STUMPY

It was but a short time after the adventure with that highway and byway robber, Master Crow, when it came time for Stumpy's annual vacation, and he puffed gloriously away in the Lighthouse tender for his week in San Francisco. As his place was taken meantime by a dull seafaring gentleman having two legs, but no acquaintance with the art of story-telling, the children greatly missed their old friend and were wild with joy when, the day after his return, he begged their father to let them come down to the shore for a picnic.

It was Saturday; of course there were no lessons, of course there were fresh doughnuts, fresh bread, and goats' milk cheese, so was not a picnic the simplest thing in the world? There was every probability, too, that Stumpy might make chowder in a kettle on the rocks and, oh, why did children have to be scrubbed and brushed within an inch of their lives when the sun shone and the waves called to the picnic?

Preparations at last being completed they set off,

Ronnie carrying the basket and scampering like a rabbit down the rocky path.

"If it wasn't for Lesley, I'd never trust him so long out of my sight," sighed Mrs. McLean, watching them from the doorway.

"Well, there's Stumpy, you know," said her husband, drawing near, "and Ronald climbs like a cat."

"That's just what he does do," agreed Margaret. "I never knew a cat but could climb up a tree, but there's a many that don't know how to get down."

Malcolm laughed in his good-humored way. "It's a fine thing you've got your children on an island," he said. "If they were on the mainland, you'd be worrying about them night as well as day."

Lesley meantime was composing a piece of po'try in the secret language, which was to be a sort of ode to Stumpy on his return from foreign parts.

"Stump-ery home-ery,
No longer roam-ery.
Children are glad-ery,
So is their dad-ery."

These were the four opening lines and there were to be another four to be recited by Ronald, in which Stumpy was to be asked to recount the incidents of

AS THEY DREW NEAR AN ODOR AROSE THAT WAS THE BEST KIND OF PO'TRY IN ITSELF

his visit. These were never composed, however, for just as the last line of the first verse was thought out, a turn in the path disclosed Stumpy and the chowder-kettle, and as they drew near an odor arose that was the best kind of po'try in itself. A large school of porpoises, far out at sea, had just smelled it distinctly and asked for a holiday to find out what it was, and Ronald exclaimed, as his nose wrinkled and wrinkled and sniffed and sniffed, "That's the best smell I ever smelled since I lived in this country!"

"You bet good smell!" laughed the old sailor. "Everything good in that chowder, but how you children get along all last week without Stumpy, hey?"

"Stump-ery true-ery,
We love you-ery!"

cried Lesley, hugging him hard.

"Oh-ery, how-ery we-ery you-ery miss-ery!" shouted Ronald, in a burst of eloquence.

"Well," said Stumpy, "I ask boss for time off some day and learn your language. Pretty hard learn, I guess. Maybe you better learn Spanish; then we all three have secret. Come now, you get plate and spoon, little son; we have dinner."

If it wasn't time for dinner by the clock, it was by the stomach, and no geese fattened for killing could have been rounder and shinier than the picnickers were when the meal was over. A walk to the cave where their father had once saved nine lives from a wreck had been promised the children, but rest on a smooth rock seemed better after such a feast, and after much coaxing Stumpy consented to tell a story, meantime.

It is better, perhaps, to tell it as Stumpy would have done could he have used his native tongue, for his English was faulty, and though it was clear enough to Lesley and Ronald it might not be so to the reader.

"It was two years ago, my children," Stumpy began, his eyes looking far out to sea, "when I visited a cousin in Santa Barbara and went many times during my stay to service at the old Mission and talked with and learned to know the good Fathers there. Naturally I told them where I lived and that my work was on an island, and Father Francisco promised to tell me a strange island story some evening when he was not busy. The time came and this is the tale in his own words, as far as I can remember them."

THE STORY OF JUANA MARIA

"There are eight islands in the Pacific, off the coast of Santa Barbara, lying from thirty to seventy miles away and protecting the mainland from fierce winds and heavy tides. The nearest of these are now used for sheep-grazing, and San Nicolás, the farthest off, was formerly noted for its fine herds of otter and seal. On this San Nicolás lived a tribe of Indians — if they *were* Indians, for no one seems really to know — and at the time of our story, nearly one hundred years ago now, it was heard that the tribe had been reduced by disease to less than twenty souls. A fisherman whose boat had been blown far out to sea by adverse winds had landed on the island for fresh water and brought the news back to Santa Barbara, adding that one old man among the natives had been able to speak Spanish and had begged him to tell the Missions along the coast of their plight and to implore the good Fathers to rescue them from their island prison.

"The news spread throughout southern California and all were eager to send for the islanders, but no ship large enough for the purpose made its appearance. At last, the *Next-to-Nothing*, a schooner that

had been on a hunting expedition in Lower California appeared in San Diego Harbor with a cargo of otter skins for sale and the skipper made a bargain with the Franciscan Fathers to sail to San Nicolás and bring the exiles back.

"The trip was made, but even before the *Next-to-Nothing* reached its destination a gale sprang up and a landing was effected with great difficulty. No time was wasted ashore and the islanders who, of course, had had no warning as to when, if ever, they would be sent for, were hurried into the boats in great excitement and confusion and all speed was made to reach the schooner.

"Somehow, in the hurry and hurly-burly a child was left behind whom a young mother had placed in the arms of a sailor to carry aboard. How this may have been we do not know, but no such child was to be found, and the mother, desperate with fright, with pleading gestures implored the Captain to return.

"To do this would have been almost impossible and would have imperiled the lives of the whole party, and the skipper could only shake his head at the woman's frantic pleading.

"Finding that they were putting out to sea the poor

girl, for she was little more, leaped overboard and struck out through the angry waters for the shore. No attempt was made to rescue her, perhaps none would have been possible, and in a moment she was lost to sight in the huge waves that crashed against the rocky coast.

"The *Next-to-Nothing*, after a stormy voyage, at last reached the harbor of San Pedro and the islanders were distributed among the neighboring Missions. The skipper planned to return at once to San Nicolás to look for the mother and child, but first going north to San Francisco for orders from the owners, the *Next-to-Nothing* was wrecked at the entrance to the Golden Gate and, there being no other craft at the time fit for the hazardous journey, the expedition was given up. The Franciscan Fathers never lost their interest in it, however, and for fifteen years they offered a reward of two hundred dollars to whoever would go to San Nicolás and bring them word of the unfortunate mother and her child.

"In the fifteenth year of the offer, a seal-hunter did visit the island, but could find no trace of human occupation, and people began to forget the story.

"Three years later a Santa Barbara man organized

an otter-hunting expedition to San Nicolás and took with him a large company of Indian guides and trappers. He had heard the tale of the abandoned pair, but saw and heard nothing to make him think they were still living, or on the island.

"On the night before they were to leave San Nicolás, however, Captain N., walking on the beach, saw before him the print of a slender foot —"

"Oh! like Robinson Crusoe!" interrupted Lesley.

"Yes," nodded Ronnie, "and Man Friday!"

"He saw the print of a slender foot," continued Stumpy, "and knew it was that of a woman. He organized a search party, but found nothing that day save a basket of rushes hanging in a tree with bone needles, threads of sinew, and a partly finished robe of birds' feathers made of small squares neatly matched and sewed together.

"Inland, they discovered several roofless enclosures of woven brush and near them poles with dried meat hanging from them, but no human beings. These were sure signs, however, that the island had inhabitants and Captain N. kept up the search with a will. After two days fresh footprints were found in the moss that covered one of the cliffs and, following them up,

a woman was discovered, crouching in terror under a clump of low bushes at the top. Captain N. greeted her gently in Spanish, and in a moment she came timidly towards him, speaking rapidly in an unknown tongue. Nobody in the party understood a word she said, although there were Indians of a dozen tribes among their number. Captain N. described her as a tall and handsome woman, in middle life, with long braids of shining black hair and a curious and beautiful dress of birds' feathers, sleeveless and with rounded neck."

"Could she have been the child left on the island?" interrupted Lesley, hurriedly.

"Oh, no," answered Stumpy. "She was too old for that. The child must have died, and this must have been the girl who leaped from the boat.

"She seemed gentle and quite willing to be taken back to the Santa Barbara Mission, where, although there were then many Indians there and the Fathers themselves spoke many tongues, no one of them understood her language.

"The good Fathers baptized her under the name of Juana Maria, and she made no protest, whatever they did, or pointed her out to do. She drooped, however,

so the story goes, from the moment she left the island, seemed dazed and looked about with questioning eyes, and one day she fell from her chair in a faint and the next morning had passed quietly away. Father Francisco showed me her grave in the shadow of the Mission tower, poor lost creature, alone and lonely in a strange world!"

"And no one ever really knew who she was, or what had happened to her?" asked Ronald.

"No; how could they when they could not speak her language and she had no time to learn theirs? She might not even have been the woman they were looking for; she might not have been an Indian at all; who knows?"

"Poor, poor thing!" mourned Lesley. "Oh, what a sad story, Stump-ery, bump-ery!"

"So sad," cried the old sailor, lifting himself from his rock, "that I forget my work. You wait here, you children; I come back one half-hour and we go where your father save me from wreck and where I lose my leg and that was one day, half good luck, half bad luck," looking down ruefully at his crutch.

CHAPTER VI

HOW THE CAT CLIMBED

WHEN Stumpy had gone, Ronald wandered off among the rocks looking for sea-birds' eggs for his collection, and Lesley strolled along the shore picking up shining shells and telling herself a story. In this romantic tale she was a princess prisoned in a tower on a far-off island, but the suitors who landed there, having heard of her marvelous beauty, were unable to declare their passion as, unfortunately, she understood no tongue but her own and that was strange to all of them.

As it fell out, the long-lost prince, her brother, in command of a gallant ship, chanced to pass by the island and, arriving at exactly the right moment, was beginning to give language-lessons to the handsomest of the suitors, when —

"Hi, Lesley, hi! Where's Ronnie?" called a hoarse voice that broke in upon her dreams.

"Ronnie? He's right here —"

"Where, then? I no see," objected Stumpy, limping down among the pebbles.

"He *was* here a moment ago — Oh," in immediate fright, "where *can* that boy be?"

"You no watch him?" asked Stumpy, with lifted eyebrows. "I think you always watch Ronnie."

"I do," answered Lesley, in a grieved voice, "I *always* do, but I forgot one moment. Oh," breaking into sobs, "*where* is he and what will mother say?"

"I know very well what she say," observed Stumpy, dryly, "but what we do before she say?"

"He must be climbing the rocks, somewhere, he *must* be, for he said only this morning that he hadn't found a murre's egg since he lived in this country."

Stumpy could not but smile at this Ronald-like speech, though at heart he was a little anxious. "H——m," he murmured. "Well, if it was a murre's egg he want, he have to climb pretty high — Halloo, halloo, Ronald!" he shouted — "Where are you? Halloo! Halloo!"

"Halloo! Halloo, Ronnie!" called Lesley in her high, clear voice.

No answer, but an unusual fluttering and screaming of sea-birds around the "Gateway Rock" showed that something was amiss there and the old sailor and the girl started off in that direction.

Now the Gateway Rock was the central one of three sisters stretching out from shore, the third being entirely surrounded by water and the second one partly on and to be reached by land. Near the top of its jagged, shining masses was a narrow opening like a door through which you saw the heaving blue waters of the Pacific like a picture in a frame of ebony. The three rocks were particularly favored by gulls, murres, and cormorants as their resting-place and Ronald had climbed there before under his father's advice and direction. Now, however, he had mounted the heights alone, for Lesley could plainly see his small figure in the Gateway as they drew near and a bit of something white that must be a handkerchief, fluttering in his hand.

When they had painfully reached the base of the Gateway Rock, it was plain that Ronald was calling them and that he was not hurt. The roar of the breakers against the cliffs was so loud that they could not hear a word he said, but his gestures showed that he had got himself into a trap and saw no way to get out.

"I can help him down if I can only get up there," cried Lesley, starting to climb the slippery cliff, but

LESLEY COULD PLAINLY SEE HIS SMALL FIGURE
IN THE GATEWAY

Stumpy held her back. "No," he shouted, "one enough; I get him down."

"But how can you, Stumpy," Lesley faltered, "with your wooden leg?"

"Got wooden leg, yes," answered Stumpy, cheerfully, "but got two arms all right. No be sailor for nothing. You wait; you see!" — and waving his hand to Ronnie he started off for the storehouse.

Lesley waited on the black rocks in an agony of fear expecting every moment that Ronald would slip down from his perch, and while she watched his small figure and turned with almost every breath to see if Stumpy hove in sight, she kept saying to herself, "No, I didn't watch him; I didn't. I forgot all about him. Mother will never call me her faithful little girl again!"

There was, in fact, no danger for Ronald if he kept quiet and did not try to climb down the steep cliff alone, but the anxious sister did not realize this, and it seemed to her that hours had passed when she spied Stumpy limping down among the rocks with a large bundle under his arm.

"All right, Ronnie!" he shouted, as he drew near, "I come pretty soon, now." And he unrolled a coil of

rope before Lesley's astonished eyes and took from within it his Indian bow and a bundle of arrows.

He held up the bow and the rope to the boy, who could see, though he could not hear, and who waved his hands and clapped them to show that he understood. Not so did Lesley, however, who looked on with a white face as if she thought that Stumpy intended to tie Ronald up with the rope and then shoot him with the arrows.

"See, little daughter," explained Stumpy, kindly; "I tie little string to arrow, tie big rope with loop on end to string, then shoot arrow up to Ronnie. He pull up rope and slip loop round big rock. Then I climb up rope, so" — illustrating hand-over-hand movement — "and I be up there pretty quick."

"But how can you get Ronnie down? He couldn't climb down a rope."

"No, that all right. He know. I do that one day up by Lighthouse. You remember? I let your father down by rope to get little lamb that fall over cliff and catch on rock. You remember?"

"Oh, yes," eagerly. "Stumpy's coming, Stumpy's coming!" she cried, turning to the boy.

The proper arrow was finally selected, the cord

fastened to it, the great bow bent, and whiz! went the shaft to its mark, the side of the Gateway. In a moment Ronald had snatched it, pulled up the rope with all the strength of eight-year-old arms, found the loop and slipped it over a convenient peak. He tried it to see that it was taut — ("Smart boy, that!" murmured Stumpy) — and waved his hand to show that it was all right.

Stumpy limped to where the end of the rope hung dangling, threw off his cap and woolen jacket, wet his hands in a pool of the rocks and started to climb, as he had once done on shipboard. It was not far — one hundred feet, perhaps — but far enough for a one-legged man and far enough for a small boy shivering in the windy Gateway above, who knew well enough that he should not have been where he was and that he was causing untold trouble by his carelessness.

There were sharp points and projections here and there in the great rock against which Stumpy could rest his good foot and get a little breath, but he reached the top almost at the end of his strength and unable to return Ronald's bear-like hug of welcome.

"You get down, young man, 'bout as soon as you can," he panted. "This be 'bout the last time

Stumpy get you out o' trouble. He getting too old.

So saying he pulled up the end of the rope, motioned the boy to come nearer, fastened it cleverly about his body with loops over the shoulders, told him to sit down in the threshold of the Gateway, with legs hanging over the cliff, and with a "Ready, now! All right!" lowered him slowly downward into Lesley's arms. The old sailor braced himself, meantime, against the needle of rock where the rope was fastened, but even so and with Ronald's light weight it was all he could do to manage the job, and the boy noted with distress how long it took his beloved friend and playmate to recover his breath and gather strength to climb down the rope himself.

Ronald was ready to meet him when he reached the safety of the rocks below and to hold out his hand and say, like a man, "I'm sorry, Stumpy, and I'll never be so careless again. Thank you, and Mother and Father will thank you, too."

"Oh, no need thank," smiled Stumpy. "Everybody help friend in trouble. But now other trouble begin. Got to go home and tell boss what you do and Lesley tell she forgot to watch like Mother say."

Both children hung their heads and blushed, but

they knew their duty well enough and had known it without Stumpy's reminder, so they set off for the Lighthouse, hand in hand, with a sorrowful good-bye for Stumpy.

The soft-hearted old man watched them go with a half-smile and a half-sigh. "Good children!" he said. "Good boy, that Ronnie, but too much like little cat. Climb up so far she can go; never think how she get down!"

Mr. and Mrs. McLean heard the children's story quietly and laid the blame on Ronald, where it rightfully belonged.

"You *must* learn to be more careful, son," warned his father. "It's no good for me to punish you. You must find out how to punish yourself so that it will make you remember."

"I'll give up the murre's egg!" cried Ronald, who had carried it safe home in the breast of his jacket, in spite of his adventures.

"That would be a foolish thing," objected his mother. "You did no wrong in trying to get the egg, only in not asking Stumpy if it was safe for you to go up the Gateway Rock alone."

"I won't go down to Stumpy's for a month, then," sniffed the culprit.

"That would be punishing Lesley as well as yourself," said his father, severely. "Think again!"

"But I *deserve* to be punished," interrupted Lesley. "I didn't watch Ronnie, like Mother always says, and I'm older than he is and ought to remember."

The boy's face flushed at his sister's generous words. "Then I'll let Lesley take Jenny Lind to water for a whole week," he cried, "though you always said" — this with a catch in the breath — "that it was a man's place."

"So it is," said his father, affectionately, "and now you talk like a man."

"And I'll give up my pudding for a week, and maybe I'd better go to bed now and then I shan't hear you read the next chapter of 'Robinson Crusoe' to-night." And here the small sufferer really began to sniff, and made his way blindly to the staircase, still with the murre's egg tightly clasped in his grimy paw.

"Oh, Father, oh, Mother!" sobbed Lesley. "He won't have to go to bed, will he, poor Ronnie?"

"'Poor Ronnie' will have to learn to look before he

leaps," said his father, quietly. "Going to bed never hurt anybody, yet." And though Margaret McLean's own eyes were moist she nodded her head in silent agreement.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE FOG

"Green-y blue, blue-y green,
Best-est fire that ever was seen!"

chanted Ronald in the Lighthouse sitting-room one foggy evening in the late summer.

It was indeed one of the "best-est," if not the *very* bestest fire that ever was seen, for it was built of drift-wood from some old copper-bottomed wreck and the flickering flames were pale blue-y green like a robin's egg, deep green-y blue like a peacock's breast, yellow as star-shine and sunset clouds, while underneath glowed a deep red, with now and then a purple bloom upon it.

"I picked up the wood on the shore this morning," said Mr. McLean, looking at the fire with satisfaction, "and brought it up with the oil on the car with Jenny Lind. It must have come from the wreck of the old *Hamburg*."

"When was she wrecked, Father?" asked Ronald.

"Oh, long ago, before our time. It was on a night

just like this, probably," looking with a shiver at the blank, white-covered windows. "The Captain of the *Hamburg* was steering straight for us, they say, hoping to catch sight of the Light through the mist, but his aim was too good and he sent his ship right into the hundred-foot channel between the islands and a sunken rock did the rest. The men were all saved, I believe, but the good ship lies there still, or most of it, only the water is so deep that you can't even see the topmasts.

"God help the poor folk at sea, to-night!" sighed Mrs. McLean, "and we so cozy here!"

It was the usual evening party at the Lighthouse, Margaret McLean knitting, her husband smoking and reading his book, and Lesley and Ronald playing checkers at the table. Nothing could have been more secure or peaceful, for Jim Crow was there, perched on a chair-back in the corner, half-asleep, and it was known that Jenny Lind was safely reposing in her stable, after a delightful day spent in doing next to nothing.

The fog had been lying about in thin trails across the sky for many hours, but had waited till night to mass its forces together into a thick blanket, white as

a roll of cotton and as dense. The Light, so Father said, could hardly be seen a hundred yards from the tower, so the steam fog-signal had been started and was sending out its long shrieks of melancholy warning, "Dan—ger! Dan—ger–r–r! Keep awa–a–a–y! Keep a–w–a–a–a–a–y!"

It was well that the little family had its own resources on such a night, for though the Lighthouse tender brought letters and papers only once in two months, there were a number of well-selected books on hand and these could always be read and re-read. There was a Government cable, of course, to the mainland, but it was not supposed to be used save for danger, death, disaster, doctors, and drugs, and the longing for a daily paper could not be classed under any of these heads.

"A–a–a–a–h! A–a–a–a–h!" groaned the fog-signal and Mrs. McLean looked up from her work. "Did you happen to notice, Father," she asked, "in the last 'San Francisco Chronicle' we had, that story about the eight-year-old boy out in Wyoming that an eagle tried to carry off?"

"Yes, I believe I spoke of it at the time. What makes you think of it now?"

"Why, because Stumpy read it, too, and he was saying when he was up here to-day that it was a 'foolishness,' as he called it, and no bird could carry such a weight."

"Oh, that's not so," said Mr. McLean, decidedly, while the children dropped their checkers and pricked up their ears for a story. "I don't know about a good-sized boy, but we know that an eagle could carry a small one. My idea is that they can lift as much in proportion to their weight as a hawk or a horned owl, and I've known a horned owl to snatch up a large house-cat and make off with it.

"My belief is that if hawks or owls can carry more than twice their weight — and everybody knows they can — that an eagle could do as much, or more, perhaps. Once, when I was a lad, I found an eagle lying helpless on his back in the road shot through the body with a rifle-ball, poor creature. I was kind of afraid of him, he looked so fierce, and I up-ended a long road skid and dropped it on him. Before it reached him he stretched up and caught it in his claws and held it up the length of his legs above him. I walked up on the skid and stood over him, and he easily held me and the skid, which I should judge would weigh more than

twenty pounds. I took pains to be weighed myself that same day and tipped the scales at one hundred and nineteen pounds. You tell Stumpy that, and tell him to put a stick in the claw of a wounded eagle and let him grasp a small tree with the other and a man must be stronger than ever I was to take the stick away from him."

Ronald had left the table as soon as eagles, hawks, and horned owls had begun to fly through the conversation and now leaned on the arm of his father's chair.

"I should think, Daddy," he said in his wheedling way, "that it would be a good night to tell us that story about the baby that was carried off to Garrison Mountain when you were a little boy in Maine. I haven't heard it, I do think, more'n once since I lived in this country."

McLean laughed. "I'm no story-teller," he said, "and a good thing I'm not. What with Stumpy and his tales and your mother there and her ballads, you children would never have learned to read if I'd told stories, too."

"Never you mind about my ballads," advised Mother, good-humoredly. "You like them just as

well as the children do. Tell the boy about the white-headed eagle. I'd like to hear it again, myself."

"It was a good while ago it happened," said McLean, "for it was not long after my father and mother died and I was brought over from the old country to an uncle on a farm in Maine.

"We knew that two old white-headed eagles built their nest every year on a crag of Garrison Mountain in plain sight of the folks in the valley and we heard them screaming over us every spring when they came back to settle down again in the old homestead. The charcoal-burners in the camps used to hear them, too, as they swooped down to the lowlands for rushes and grass to line their nest, and when the great eggs were laid and the mother was keeping them warm, many a lamb or little pig did the old father eagle take her for her dinner. Mothers used to be extra watchful of their babies for the first few weeks of spring, but nothing ever did happen and of course they thought nothing ever would."

"Would an eagle really like a baby better than a lamb?" asked Lesley, fearfully.

"Why, no, of course not, child. It would only see something soft and light that might be good to eat

and snatch it up. Well, one warm spring morning when the apple-trees were in bloom Mrs. Shadwell had set her baby boy out to play on the grass in the care of his sister, and had left him but a few moments when a shadow flew by the window; she heard the flapping of great wings, cries and calls of distress, and she rushed to the door just in time to see old Father Whitehead rise into the air with the baby in his claws. There was nothing to do but to scream and scream and to snatch the big dinner-horn and blow blast after blast upon it to summon her husband and the charcoal-burners.

"The neighbors gathered in a few moments and plainly saw the giant bird with the white bundle in his grasp circling toward his nest. It was dreadful to see the agony of the parents and to hear the mother cry, 'Oh, they'll tear my Willie to pieces. Oh, save him, save him!'

"But how were they to save him? Many a time had the best marksmen of the settlement tried to shoot the robber pair, but never had succeeded, and it would be a terrible risk now to try and hit the old bird while he carried the child in his grasp. Fortunately an old hunter — 'Dave,' they called him; I never knew his

other name — had lately come to the settlement from the North woods where he had been trapping sable. Luckily, he heard the horn-blast on the hills and knew it meant danger of some kind.

"Reaching the valley, he saw the great bird overhead with his white burden, saw the crowd of neighbors, and judged what had happened.

"He loaded his long rifle, ran toward the bridge where he could get a better view of the eagles' nest, leveled his piece on the rail and knelt on the planking. The father followed him begging him to be careful, to be careful, or he would kill the child, but old Dave waved his hand for silence, watched the eagle as he soared upward and the mother bird circling and screaming over the nest — and waited!

"I was only a boy, but I shall never forget the fright and the suspense in the eyes of the neighbors while they waited for Dave's shot. It was a long range and the bullets fired by the best marksmen in the village had always failed to reach it, hitherto.

"Would the old hunter have better success? Could he kill the bird and not the child?

"At length the eagle slowly descended to the nest where his young ones were clamoring for their dinner

and, just as he reached the rocky platform on which it was built, Dave fired.

"We held our breaths, but before the smoke from his rifle had disappeared the head of the mighty bird was seen to fall. Dave waved his hand again for silence and leveled his piece a second time, for the mother was slowly circling down to see what was amiss in the nest. The old man was a wonderful marksman, the best I shall ever see, for he fired again just at the very moment when she was stretching out her feet to alight and in a second we saw her tumble down the side of the crag."

"Oh, that was splendid!" cried Ronald, his eyes sparkling with excitement, "and then the poor mother knew that her baby was safe."

"Not at all," answered McLean. "She knew nothing of the kind, and none of us did. How did she know but the young eagles were big enough to tear the child to pieces? How did she know he would not toss about and roll over the cliff?

"No, the thing was to get him out of the nest, and to do that they had to climb a crag that nobody had ever gone up, not the best man in the settlement. And they wouldn't have done it then, if it hadn't been

for old Dave. I was one that helped the men carry the ladders and the ropes to the foot of the crag. I saw them climb as far as they could get a foothold and then set a ladder up into a gnarled oak that grew out of the rocks above. Dave climbed to the oak, pulled up the ladder and set it still farther up, lashing it to the oak-tree, while Shadwell — the baby's father, you know — clambered after him on another ladder the men had brought. He followed Dave till they found a part of the cliff where they could climb without ladders, and then, holding on by tough shrubs that grew here and there, they dragged themselves up to the top of the crag.

"But then, you see, they were too high up and old Dave had to rope the father and lower him down to the nest which was built on a kind of rocky platform below."

"Oh, the poor mother!" sighed Mrs. McLean, "not knowing all that time whether the child was alive or dead!"

"They very soon knew," said her husband, "for when the father found the child alive and unhurt, he held it up for us all to see, and then, what a shout went up from the valley!"

"But how did they get the baby down?" questioned Ronald.

"Much the same way as Stumpy got you down from the rock the other day; they roped him and lowered him into the arms of the men who were waiting at the foot of the first ladder and there were plenty of arms and good, strong ones too.

"Oh, it was a wonderful sight. I never shall forget it, though I haven't thought of it for years, and shouldn't have now, if your mother hadn't read that story in the 'Chronicle.'"

"Do you think," Lesley asked her mother wistfully, "if the little sister had been watching the baby, that maybe the eagle wouldn't have carried it off?"

"That I can't say," answered her mother, briskly; "an eagle is a good-sized bird to fight, but I *can* say that it's past time for you two to be in bed!"

Lesley did not fall asleep as quickly as usual that night, and when at last she drowsed she awoke with a sudden start and a beating heart. What had frightened her? She did not know, but she tiptoed to the window to see if the fog had lifted and found that all

was clear and the Light shining bravely across the waters. The door between her brother's room and her own was always left open at night, for she had had a care of him ever since he was a baby and she glanced through it as she went back to bed. She stopped in amaze, for there was no dark head on the pillow there. Where was Ronnie? She was in the room in a minute, and looking in the closet, under the bed, in the corners, then back in her own room where perhaps the boy might be hiding and trying to frighten her. No, no Ronnie there.

She ran to her mother's door with a cry, and Mrs. McLean, hearing, lifted her head to say, "What is it, Lesley? Are you sick?"

"No, Mother, but I can't find Ronnie," with a little gasp of fear.

"Not find Ronnie!" — and in a moment Mrs. McLean had hurried on slippers and an old shawl and was in her boy's room. In another moment Malcolm was there, too, gathering some clothing about him as he came, and together they looked in every likely and unlikely place upstairs. Then Malcolm hurried to the floor below, calling back that every door was shut and bolted on the inside.

"The cellar!" cried Mrs. McLean, but no, that door was also closed and bolted.

"He must be in the tower, then," exclaimed Father, hurrying to the second floor again, and Lesley and her mother followed him as he ran up the corkscrew stairs to the Light.

All was peaceful there; the lamp blazed like a splendid sun and the speckless glass protected it from all wandering breezes. All was peaceful, but the little door in the masonry was open and the three dived through it into the gallery that ran around the tower.

"Hush!" whispered Mrs. McLean, "don't speak to him! He's walking in his sleep."

That is just what the boy was doing, in fact — walking on the gallery in his little white nightgown, his eyes fast closed, as calmly as if he had been at play on the grass.

"Get behind him, quietly, Malcolm," whispered Mrs. McLean again, "so that he won't fall, but don't speak to him now. Let him alone and perhaps he'll come in, himself."

They watched silently as Ronald came toward them, went back again and then, with arms outstretched, seemed trying to climb the tower, still with

fast-closed eyes. Half-clothed and shivering in the night air, they watched him make this attempt three times and then pass them by, totally unconscious of their presence, slip in through the little door, and make his way downstairs to bed.

The boy did not waken even when his mother wrapped the blankets more closely about him, but slept on sweetly while the watchers hung above his bed.

"Has he ever walked in his sleep before, Lesley?" asked Malcolm, anxiously.

"No, Father, no; I never saw such a thing. He always talks in his sleep a lot, you know, but he doesn't get up."

"It's likely he won't remember anything about this in the morning, Lesley, and we'll tell him when he comes downstairs," said Mother. "I'll fasten his door now and then we'll get some sleep. Thank Heaven, we found him in time!"

In the morning when his astonishing feat had been related to Ronald, he only half-believed it until the evidence of three pairs of eyes was brought forward.

"What were you trying to do, Ronnie?" asked Lesley, curiously — "trying to climb up the tower?"

"Oh, I remember!" cried the boy, "I remember now. It was a dream I had and I was climbing up a rock to reach an eagle's nest."

"Then, in future," said his father, good-humoredly, "as you seem determined to climb by night as well as by day, you will please tie a string to your toe when you go to bed and hitch the other end of it to Lesley's bedpost. Then, at least, you'll have a companion when you start on your midnight rambles."

CHAPTER VIII

THE WHITE SLIPPER

It was not long after Ronald's sleep-walking adventure when the faithful Stumpy was stricken with a sharp rheumatic attack that made it necessary for him to come up to the Lighthouse and be nursed by Mrs. McLean. On the whole he found his illness rather agreeable than otherwise, for Ronald and Lesley were his constant companions and the Lightkeeper laughingly said more than once that he didn't know when he hired Stumpy whether he had engaged a nurse for his children, or an assistant for his own work.

When the old fellow was recovering and could limp about almost as well as usual, he rambled out one balmy day with his young friends and they all sat together on the rocks in the sun. Not a feather of breeze was blowing, a thing most remarkable and to be remembered, for King Æolus was supposed to have his cave in the immediate vicinity of the island and to let out from it all his romping, roaring winds every morning.

Jenny Lind, though not invited, had joined the party and was looking down upon them, benevolently, from a high rock; several sheep were scrambling about near by and a rabbit occasionally appeared, stood on his hind legs, sniffed the air, and disappeared again. Jim Crow was there, perched on the donkey's back and croaking certain remarks in a low tone about this being a hard world, anyway, and it was a strange thing, so it was, that a poor crow couldn't have a red ribbon around his neck, like Lesley. From time to time he eyed the steel chain that hung from Stumpy's pocket with such a covetous air that its owner clapped his hand over it in pretended alarm and cried laughingly, "Oh, you Jim Crow! You young, handsome bird! You no want take chain from poor old man."

"Jim-ery Crow-ery, never-y you-ery mind-ery!" cried Lesley, affectionately. "Bad-ery Stump-ery, tease-ery you-ery!"

"Oh-ery you-ery think-ery Jim-ery never-y bad-ery!" exclaimed Ronald.

"Oh, that secret language! When I learn?" sighed Stumpy. "I tell you many times you better learn Spanish."

"Well, we're willing," answered Lesley, cheerfully.

"We always were. Teach us some now. We know '*Viva México!*' to begin with."

"I think you not even know my name in Spanish," said the old man, seriously. "My name Francisco Lopez, or Pancho Lopez, if you want use little name. In Mexico children like you call me Don Pancho."

"Well, that's all right," said Ronald. "I'll call you that, and now we know four words."

"If we learn eight more words this afternoon and that will make twelve, will you tell 'The White Slipper?'" asked Lesley, eagerly.

"Sure I will," agreed Don Pancho, and the children set to work at once and learned the Spanish for *donkey*, *crow*, *sheep*, *lamb*, *rabbit*, *man*, *boy* and *girl*.

"Well, that's done," said Ronnie with a sigh of content, "and now 'The White Slipper.'"

Here is the story, but it would best be told as the little Pancho heard it at his mother's knee and not in the halting English he had learned since then.

The White Slipper[1]

"There was once a king of great riches and a great kingdom whose queen was no longer living and who

[1] From the Spanish of Enrique Ceballos Quintana.

would have been very lonely on his golden throne had it not been for his beautiful daughter, Diamantina.

"Only fifteen years old was Diamantina, but how beautiful and how graceful! When she rode through the streets of the city, her eyes and her jewels shone like the sun at midday and she had more lovers than there are grasses in the meadow. For all that, her father, King Balancin, had no idea of marriage for her and indeed she was too busy with her birds and her flowers to think about a husband.

"But where is the White Slipper?" the children interrupted.

"Well, that is exactly what Balancin wanted to know," said Stumpy, "and I will tell you all about it this very minute.

"Everybody in this world, my dears, no matter how happy he seems to be, has yet some trouble to bear, be it small or great, and Balancin's trouble was of very good size.

"The monarch was devoted to the sport of hunting and one day, while pursuing the wild boar, he fell from his horse into a ravine where his face and hands were torn with thorns and his foot received a grievous wound.

"All the doctors in the kingdom were summoned to him, one after the other, but no one of them cured the wound which kept the poor king in constant pain. At length a learned physician from another country was heard of, was offered a magnificent fee and summoned to the palace, and after examining the injured foot he declared that he could not cure it, but that he could make a sandal or slipper for it that would quiet the pain. This offer Balancin eagerly accepted, and the physician gave orders for the slipper, which was to be made of kid-skin, beautifully soft and white and was guaranteed to last one thousand years from that date.

"When this wonderful object was delivered, the monarch naturally wished to try it at once, but the physician warned him that it must first be soaked for eight days in a liquid which he, only, could manufacture, if it were to be of any service.

"This was done, the famous White Slipper was finally put on and, oh, joy! Balancin was comfortable once more. His delight was such that he made the physician the most extravagant offers to remain at his court, but the learned man replied that he had many patients awaiting him in his own country, and he departed, at length, laden with the richest of presents.

"The king was now as happy as the sun on Easter Day and so was the charming Diamantina who had shared to the full in her father's distress, but, alas! children of my heart, the joys of this world are fleeting!

"The date of the king's birthday now drew near and great preparations were made for the occasion. There was to be a water festival, an afternoon of sports and games, a grand banquet at night, fireworks and an illumination of the palace. The king and his beautiful daughter appeared early upon the streets, arrayed in the greatest magnificence and were cheered and applauded wherever they went. The day was spent in gayety, but, at night, as Balancin stepped into the boat which was to take him back to the palace his foot caught on one of the thwarts and, shaking it, in a moment of impatience with the pain, off fell the White Slipper into the stream!

"The king cried out in distress, but, as it was already dusk, no one noticed his loss, and he fell swooning into the bottom of the boat before any one understood what had happened.

"The courtiers rushed to his rescue, but in their haste they overturned the boat in so doing and upset

the unfortunate monarch into the water. Diamantina fainted, at once, on seeing her father's plight, and parent and child were carried insensible to the palace where an end was immediately made to all festivities.

"Balancin remained insensible for three days and therefore could not order a search for the White Slipper; Diamantina, however, recovered on the morning after the accident, inquired for the treasure which none of the careless attendants had even thought of up to that time, and, finding that it was missing, immediately fainted away again. When she came to herself she at once organized search-parties both by land and by water in every direction, but neither then nor at any other time was so much as an inch of the White Slipper ever found.

"The king, again pursued by pain both night and day, fell into the deepest gloom, the princess wept like a fountain, and the court was plunged into mourning. Messengers were dispatched for the foreign physician, but, alas! in spite of all his learning he had departed this life.

"The unfortunate monarch now posted notices in every part of his kingdom offering the hand of Diamantina and the succession to the throne to whosoever

would find the White Slipper. The princess, ready to sacrifice all for her beloved father, watched from the palace windows the swarm of youths who swam and dived in the neighboring stream in search of the missing treasure. The town looked like a seaside resort in the bathing season and, wherever you went, showers of drops were scattered over your garments as the dripping figures, with chattering teeth, darted in and out of the waters.

"At last, when Balancin was completely discouraged and ready to put an end to his life, he heard a disturbance one day in an antechamber of the palace and sending to inquire the cause found out that a fellow of the streets, a mere nobody from nowhere, as the servants expressed it, had had the impudence to call at the palace and ask to measure His Majesty's foot for another shoe like the one he had lost.

"'And what did you do with the fellow?' asked Balancin.

"'We packed him off at once,' cried the servants, 'and gave him a good drubbing besides for his insolence.'

"'Very ill done,' frowned the king. 'The meanest of my subjects has a right to attempt, at least, to do me

a service. Send for the youth. I can hear what he has to say, if I can do no more.'

"The poor fellow was sent for at once, and, appearing before the monarch and giving him a respectful salutation, begged permission to measure the injured foot and to place upon the wound a small plaster that would ease the pain until he could complete the cure.

"Balancin was astonished at the ease and assurance of the youth, but he liked his face and his manner and allowed him to make the examination, which he did with the greatest care. The plaster was scarcely laid on the wound when the king felt some relief and, more astonished still at this result, he asked his caller's name.

"'I am very well known in the city, Your Majesty,' the youth answered humbly, 'although I have no kinsfolk and never knew my parents. When I was little they called me "Goldfinch," because I always sang in spite of my troubles and they call me "Goldfinch" still.'

"'And you think you can cure me, Master Finch?' asked Balancin.

"'I am sure of it, sire.'

"'And how long will it take?'

"'I can hardly manage it in less than fifteen days, sire,' answered Goldfinch.

"'And what do you require for the cure?' inquired the king.

"'A good horse, strong and swift, Your Majesty.'

"Balancin was astonished again, and the courtiers could hardly restrain their laughter, but the monarch replied at once: 'The horse shall be yours, Master Goldfinch, and in fifteen days I shall expect you here again. If you succeed in the cure, you know what the reward will be; if you fail, your daring will receive a fitting punishment.'

"Goldfinch made a profound bow and withdrew; the horse was provided at once, and the youth left the city followed by the hoots and jeers of the entire populace.

"Now I must tell you, my children, who Goldfinch was and how he became possessed of so much medical knowledge.

"His parents having died in his infancy he was taken in, out of charity, by an old apothecary who had nothing left of his business but his learning and his library.

"As the boy grew, he applied himself to study the

books with which the walls were lined and was greatly assisted and encouraged by his benefactor, who, upon his death, bequeathed to his charge all the weighty volumes. The youth gained a light employment to support his scanty needs and spent his remaining time in study, whereby, one day, he found a marvelous specific for wounds which, however, required the use of a plant only to be found at a great distance and was thus completely out of his reach, as he possessed neither horse nor money.

"He had often seen the Princess Diamantina in her royal progress through the city and cherished for her a passionate affection, but had had no hope, even of speaking to her, until he saw the king's proclamation published in the streets and so was emboldened to call at the palace and offer a substitute for the White Slipper.

"Astride his good horse, Goldfinch now galloped away for six whole days, stopping hardly to eat and only to snatch an hour's sleep at night, and finally, in the depths of a thick wood, he found the plant so much desired. He plucked it, placed it carefully in his bosom, and *Katakées, katakás, katakées, katakás,* he was off again, galloping back to the city.

"Reasoning that if the king were willing to give his daughter and his kingdom to the man who should furnish him with a shoe to ease his pain, he would be even more grateful to one who should cure him altogether, the youth prepared his balsam according to directions and mixed within it the juices of the precious plant.

"This done and before the fifteen days had quite expired, Goldfinch presented himself at the palace and asked for an audience with the king. All was immediately prepared for his reception and the court assembled, the beautiful Diamantina entering by her father's side. She saw at once that the new physician was young and of good appearance and, modestly casting down her eyes, awaited her fate.

"Goldfinch approached His Majesty and after the usual salutations inquired of him whether he would prefer another White Slipper, or a complete cure of the wounded foot. Balancin naturally replied that a complete cure was what most he longed for in the world, whereupon Goldfinch at once applied his precious balsam to the wound. A few moments slipped by, and the king, the courtiers, and most of all the princess, waited with bated breath.

"Suddenly Balancin started to his feet, he walked, he ran across the floor, and finally, in a transport of ecstasy, he danced gayly about the room, tossing his crown before him like a ball into the air.

"'Approach, my benefactor, approach, Prince Goldfinch!' he cried, 'and I will gladly give thee thy reward.'

"Drawing toward him his beloved daughter, who was blushing like a white cloud in the setting sun, Balancin joined the hands of the young couple and ordered the immediate celebration of their wedding.

"Prince Goldfinch, attended by respectful courtiers, withdrew to a sumptuous apartment in the palace and shortly issued clad in white velvet embroidered in gold. Diamantina, in garments frosted with lace and glittering with gems, joined him at the altar and amid the cheers of the populace the marriage took place.

"The new-made prince filled equally well his double offices of husband and son-in-law, and on the death of Balancin reigned over the kingdom many years in peace and contentment."

"Oh, what a good story!" cried Lesley.

HE DANCED GAYLY ABOUT THE ROOM, TOSSING HIS CROWN BEORE HIM LIKE A BALL

"Stump-ery, true-ery
I love you-ery!"

and she pressed close to the blue-clad arm beside her.

"Much obliged to you, Don Pancho," said Ronald in an offhand, manly way.

Nobody else said anything, for Jenny Lind had wandered away and Jim Crow had flapped his wings once or twice and departed, crying as he went, "Caw! Caw! I know a better story than that, about a pirate and a buried treasure."

There had been a rabbit in almost constant attendance upon the party, but he had popped up and popped down so frequently that it was hard to tell at any given time whether it was himself or his brother, and probably timidity would have hindered either of them from giving applause even to a better story than that of the White Slipper.

CHAPTER IX

LESLEY TO THE RESCUE!

MANY seemingly uneventful weeks slipped by after Stumpy's recovery and return to the storehouse, but you may be sure that they were far from uneventful to the folk of the island. Life is never very dull when, like the gulls, the murres, the gannets, and the rabbits, you have to seek out your daily food and shelter and go without it, if you find nothing suitable. The domestic animals on the island were well provided for; still, there were daily and exciting climbing-parties among the goats and kids, and Jenny Lind amused herself by hiding away from the Lightkeeper whenever there seemed a chance that she might be asked to draw the little car to the shore.

The children had books and lessons, fishing and gathering sea-moss and shells for their occupations, and on days of blinding fog, or unusually fierce wind, they always sought Humpty Dumpty Land, where they played with dolls, arranged their collections, used their tools, cut out and pasted pictures, or dressed up Jim Crow with beads and ribbons, some-

times tying a long silken trail to his inky feathers and seeing him walk about the attic, mincing along like an elderly lady on a slippery ballroom floor.

"Ho! ho! ho!
Old Jim Crow,
You're the funniest kind of a bird,
I ever did know!"

sang Ronald one morning when they had dressed their pet to particular advantage.

"Oh, Ronnie!" cried Lesley, "that's not a good verse."

"Why not, then? It sounds good to me."

"No, it's too long in the middle. It ought to be,

"Ho! ho! ho!
Old Jim Crow,
You're just a funny bird;
And that I know!"

"Well, maybe that *is* better," agreed Ronald, "and I can dance it, any way." And he began to whirl about the playroom, stamping out the measure with a will.

"Oh, hush, Ronnie!" cried Lesley; "you'll tear the house down. . . . I wonder," she added slowly, holding the crow to her cheek while he caressed her with his

beak, "if Father will let us take old Jim if we go away."

"Why, shan't we take *everything?*" questioned Ronald, with wondering eyes. "Jenny Lind and Jim Crow and the goats and — no, not the rabbits, o' course."

"And — not Jenny Lind, nor the goats either," said Lesley, shaking her head. "They belong to the Gov'ment, you know, like Father says the Light does."

"And does Stumpy belong to the Gov'ment?" in awe-stricken tones.

"I don't know," answered Lesley, cautiously, "but I believe he *must* belong to us, so prob'ly we could take him."

This question, not of the removal of Jim Crow and Stumpy, but of the entire family, had been one that had prevented Mr. and Mrs. McLean for some time from finding life dull or unexciting. The Lighthouse tender had come in since Stumpy's illness began and had brought a letter from the "Gov'ment," a big one with a big seal, to Malcolm McLean.

It looked on the outside just like an ordinary letter, with a check in it for salary, perhaps, or a notice of oil

that had been shipped for the Light, but in fact it held a bomb that exploded when the envelope was opened and filled the whole house with surprise and excitement.

The "Gov'ment" said, and said it very handsomely, that Malcolm McLean's work as Lightkeeper on Friar's Island had long been known and appreciated and that, considering his fine record and his length of service, it had been decided to appoint him to the care of the Santa Barbara Light, which was on the mainland, had a good house with plenty of ground for cultivation, was within easy reach of the town, with its churches and schools, and commanded a better salary.

It seemed and it was a wonderful appointment, but it was entirely unexpected and required a great deal of consideration. Ronald declared that he had never heard such a letter since he lived in this country, and his father asked him, with a twinkle in his eye, whether it was the praise of the Lightkeeper, or the thought of leaving the island that so astonished him.

"'Course I *knew* you were the best Lightkeeper, ever," explained Ronald, carefully; "I knew that when I was a little boy, but I 'spected we'd live on this island forever'n ever!"

"And I thought so, too," Lesley chimed in eagerly.

"No wonder they thought so, Malcolm," smiled Mrs. McLean, turning to her husband, "when they were both born here and have hardly ever been away. I don't know but that I thought so, myself, and it will be hard to leave the old place, if we decide to go. Still," hesitatingly, "there's the church and the schools for the children."

"Well," said McLean, "we've talked it over till we've nearly worn it out, but that letter to the Light-house Commissioner has got to be written to-night one way or the other" — and here he brought his hand down on the table with a bang — "for it's got to be sent by the tender to-morrow."

"Oh, is the *Vigilant* coming to-morrow? Oh, goody, goody!" cried Lesley, jumping up and down and clapping her hands.

"Let's-ery go-ery to-ery bed-ery earl-ery!" whispered Ronnie, drawing Lesley into a corner.

"What-ery for-ery?" inquired Lesley, with a look of astonishment.

"To-ery see-ery tug-ery come-ery in-ery first-ery, you-ery goose-ery!" laughed the boy.

The mother laughed, too, seeing the whispering

pair, and inquired, "Who do you think will understand your 'secret language,' if you go to Santa Barbara?"

"Oh, we'll teach it to the natives, like the Missionaries did when they first came to California," cried Lesley, gayly, jumping out from her corner.

Of course as the Lighthouse tender was sent only once in two months and as no other vessel touched the island regularly, to see her come in was a great event and one always viewed with excitement by the entire population, with the exception, perhaps, of the seabirds, the rabbits, and the fishes, who did not care much for outside gayety.

The Lightkeeper, with Jenny Lind and the car, was early on the shore, long before the *Vigilant* could have been hoped for, and Stumpy, waiting in the storehouse door, saluted the Boss in nautical fashion and limped to his side to exchange opinions on wind and weather. Mrs. McLean forsook her usual stroll among the cabbages and, tying herself up in a shawl against the wind, her head as tightly bandaged as a sausage, she took her stand at the top of the flight of steps nearest the Lighthouse where everything could be seen and heard. The children stood by her side, at

first, but soon clattered down the steps and along the rocky path to the shore, where novelty and gayety seemed more possible.

It was a gray day with a troubled sea and the air was filled with the screams of the sea-birds and the dash of the breakers against the black and jagged rocks. As to that, however, these noises were as familiar to the island-folk and as little noticed by them, as the rumble of street-cars and the honk of automobiles are to people of the city.

The children had hardly reached the shore, where Stumpy and the Lightkeeper were already stationed in their little rowboat, when a trail of white smoke was seen on the horizon, and jumping up and down in wild excitement Ronald cried, "There she is, there she is, Lesley! We were only just in time!"

The *Vigilant* at last hove in sight, steamed to within a few hundred feet of the shore and then blew a blast that startled the birds into louder screaming and greater flapping of wings.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah for the *Vigilant!*" cried the children, and in a moment out shot their father's flat-bottomed skiff from the rocks, dipping down behind each breaker and popping up again

when it had been passed, like a very Jack-in-the-Box.

The "Gov'ment" had never felt it necessary to build a pier at Friar's Island, so the only way to land the stores and the barrels of oil was to lower a few of them at a time from the tender into the little boat, row them back to the shore, and then haul them up by a derrick to a small platform that jutted out from the rocks. It was Pacific Ocean, you know, straight up to the island, with no friendly bay or shallow water, just wild surf and big breakers to the very base of the unfriendly cliffs.

The children watched the rocking skiff as the first load was lowered from the ship's side, McLean receiving and placing the boxes while Stumpy balanced the boat with his oars. With eager eyes they watched the return, and Ronald waded far out to catch the package of papers and letters which his father threw into his arms. Then there was a scramble up the rocks and up the steps to Mother, who scurried off at once to the house, her skirts flapping in the wind, to look over her treasures.

The children ran back again to the shore, Ronald pitching headlong down most of the last flight of steps, but picking himself up quickly and calling back

to his sister, "No matter, Les'! Nothing but the nose-bleed!"

His handkerchief held to his nose, he stood by Lesley on the rocks and watched the slow unloading of the barrels of oil, which formed, of course, the largest part of the cargo. Then the *Vigilant* came to life again, immediately found herself in great haste, puff-puff-puffed impatiently, as if saying, "Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!" gave a loud blast of farewell and made off for her next Lighthouse.

The rolling in to the storehouse and the packing away of the barrels of oil was not of much interest to the children, so, as their father had told them that they need not go home until he went up for dinner with Jenny Lind and the car, they sought for fresh amusement.

"I believe I left a book somewhere down here on the rocks," said Lesley. "Let's get it out and read till Father's ready."

"No, no!" shouted Ronald, "I don't want to read now. Let's go up higher and maybe I can fish off the platform."

"You remind me of that boy in the 'po'try' Mother reads us," grumbled Lesley, following him slowly,

"the one that went through the Alpine village holding the banner."

"Don't remember him!" said Ronald, stopping halfway up the steps.

"Oh, yes, he's in the Fifth Reader."

"Well, say him, then!"

> "The shades of night were falling fast
> When through an Alpine village passed
> A youth, who bore 'mid snow and ice
> A banner with the strange device,
> Excelsior!"

repeated Lesley, obediently.

"Oh, yes, I remember. Excelsior! Excelsior!" — and up the remaining steps the boy scampered like a squirrel.

Arrived at the platform above, Lesley settled herself with her book on a coil of rope and began to read the story of "Perlino," that enchanting youth made of wax and sugar and rosewater and roseleaves and pearls and rubies and sapphires and yellow sewing-silk by the Princess who was so unsatisfied with the ordinary ready-made lover. Ronald found his rod and line, baited his hook from a supply that Stumpy always had on hand, and, sitting down on the edge of

the platform, began to fish for the pink rock cod found in abundance around the island. He had been trusted to do this for a year, now, so long as some one was with him to see that he did not attempt any too daring feats, and Lesley felt no particular uneasiness as she glanced up from her story, only called, "Be careful, Ronnie, won't you?"

"'Fraid Cat! 'Fraid Cat!" shouted Ronald, scornfully, turning his head toward her, but in a moment came a long shrill scream, "Lesley! Lesley! I'm falling!" — and springing to her feet the frightened girl saw her brother slip over the edge of the platform borne down by the weight of his rod. An unusually large fish must have caught suddenly at the bait, given it a tug when Ronald was not watching, and overbalanced the little fisherman.

Beneath the platform was a sheer wall of black rock, and below that, five or six feet of water into which Ronald, screaming for help, was plunged. Lesley realized, even in that moment of terrible fear, that her father and Stumpy were near at hand and, screaming for help, too, she rushed to Ronald's assistance with a long fish-gaff that stood near by.

Leaning over the platform she caught it in his cloth-

ing and held him up for a moment, calling, above the noise of the breakers, "All right, Ronnie, Father's coming, Father's coming!"

It was only for a moment, however, for the weight of the struggling and gasping boy was more than she could hold, and before she knew it she, too, was dragged over the edge of the platform and down into the depths below.

The last despairing screams of both children were heard by the men at the storehouse, and McLean, followed by Stumpy, ran like a deer toward the sounds, pulling off his coat as he went. He scrambled up a rock near the platform and seeing, as he expected, the struggling forms in the depths below, leaped to their rescue. He was only just in time, for, as he caught them and pulled them to the shore, they hung from his grasp like mere bundles of clothing, limp and lifeless.

Stumpy had waded deep into the water to meet the stricken father and carried Ronnie to the land. Together the two men worked over the little bodies, chafing their hands and working their arms up and down to expel the water from their lungs, and before long quivering eyelids and struggles for breath showed the watchers that the two dear lives were saved.

Dripping with water like a merman, McLean rushed for Jenny Lind and the car with Lesley in his arms, followed by Stumpy with the boy. There was a tarpaulin on the car which was to have been used to cover the groceries as they were hauled up to the Lighthouse, and, throwing this over the children, Stumpy held them close while McLean urged the unwilling Jenny Lind over the railway.

Mrs. McLean, whose eyes were never far from the windows when her bairns were abroad, suddenly caught a glimpse of Jenny galloping, saw the two men on the car, and the covered heap beside them. What a lifetime of agony she went through until she reached the door and saw that under the canvas cover the children were breathing, she never could tell you! They were gathered in their parents' arms, carried upstairs, undressed, dried, rubbed, wrapped in warm flannels, and laid side by side in bed before they could do more than sob and cry out, "Mother, Mother, Mother," over and over again. Ronald did murmur in a low voice, "Not Lesley's fault, Mummy; Ronnie's fault," but even those few words were only half-spoken, as he dropped off to sleep, worn-out with terror and excitement.

Quivering in every limb with the sudden shock and the fright that had followed it, Mrs. McLean watched her darlings as they slept, while the father, who had told her as much of the accident as he knew himself, sat below, waiting for the waking. It is true that the Lightkeeper had been told nothing as yet of what had happened; but he had found the fish-gaff still caught in Ronald's clothing and guessed how it had come there.

As Margaret McLean sat quietly beside the bed, Lesley opened her eyes. "Where's Ronnie?" she asked, with a startled look.

"Here, Lesley, mother's faithful little Lesley!" cried Margaret, bending over her. "It was you who saved Ronnie and here he is beside you!"

"My Ronnie!" crooned Lesley, lovingly, turning her heavy head toward the round cheek on the pillow, "My Ronnie!" — and so, relieved and comforted, sank softly to sleep again.

It was twilight when Mrs. McLean crept down the stair to find her husband and Stumpy anxiously awaiting her. The old sailor had made two trips to the shore during the afternoon to see that no thievish rabbit, goat, or sea-bird had made off with the stores,

but he could find no rest until he had heard the last news of the day from the "little children of his heart," as he called them in his caressing Spanish way.

"They'll do now, Father," said Margaret, thankfully, leaning wearily against her husband's arm. "They're awake and calling for supper and they've told me all about it. Ronnie only did what he has always done since we let him use a rod and line, but he says he never felt such a tug as that fish gave him, 'since he lived in this country.'"

Here she half-laughed and choked, and so did both her hearers.

Just then a little head appeared at the window above, "Mummy, Daddy, sing 'Eternal Father,' won't you, and you too, Stumpy? It's most evening now. Les' and I will sing up here —"

"Eternal Father! strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidst the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep:
O hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

Amen."

The words floated into the air from the open doorway and, perhaps, for the wind was quiet now, the song reached some lonely fishing-boat cruising about the island. The shadows lengthened, and soon the brave Light sent out its cheering rays across the waters, while below, saved from the perils of the sea, the children slept in peace.

THE END

JUVENILE - STORAGE

J Smith c.1
Children of the lighthouse.

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